



Interview: Arrabal

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This conversation between Arrabal and a group of students and faculty members took place at Cornell University in April 1974.

interview/ARRABAL

A common opinion among those inclined to be critical of culture and wines produced south of the Pyrenees is that Spanish literature is always derivative of something. Specifically, I have heard it said that your theater is half Goya, half Beckett. What is your reaction?

You talk about the "Word," but you do exactly the opposite of what earlier dramatists did. You seem to destroy words, debase language. We might ask ourselves if the theater can survive if it destroys its own medium.

What sort of reaction do you look for in your spectators or readers? Is it a negative one, since there is so much that is shocking and repulsive in your plays? In *And They Put Handcuffs on the Flowers*, for example, one leaves the theater completely horrified, disgusted, and with the feeling of having lost contact with everything. If the spectator loses contact with the play, the dramatist fails. Is that the response you expect, or is there something positive to be gleaned from your work?

One does indeed emerge from the play with a feeling of horror, and of course one feels compassion for the prisoners. But all those frightful scenes destroy everything, even the positive emotions that might be aroused.

Of Goya there is a great deal in my work. But at the time I was writing my first plays, I was living in a small, primitive village in Spain, oblivious to the very existence of Beckett. I wrote those plays in perfect innocence, and when I showed them to some bright friends of mine, they said: "But that's very much like Beckett!" "Who is Beckett?" I asked. And they told me: "He's a writer." I read his work, and indeed there were points of contact between us—a very understandable phenomenon, since we are both witnesses to our time and were traveling at that moment along the same path. Starting with my second volume of plays, my theater has very little connection with Beckett's. In the period when Ionesco and Beckett were beginning to write, the playwright was faced with a very important problem: the search for reality. Reality was to be seized by figures such as Ionesco, Beckett, Adamov—the so-called dramatists of the absurd. Their literature, which they considered realistic, was called absurd and avant-garde, even though it was the very opposite, a literature that reflected reality to perfection. That was the problem facing men who are now between sixty and seventy years old, and we only happened on the scene after that. Their whole theater is a theater of communication through the Word, ruled by His Majesty the Word. Then we came with our theater, which said that no longer was the Word exclusive ruler; rather, His Majesty was image, gesture, body, movement. We created a theater of movement, gesture. Immediately, critics delved into its origins and found, for example, Artaud. It is not surprising that Artaud—a forerunner and a man who had suffered enormously—should have been able to see thirty years into the future, into today's theater. The theater we are creating at this moment (in the United States you have exciting representatives like the Living Theater, the Open Theater, the Playhouse Theater) has nothing to do with the so-called avant-garde, absurd, surrealist theater of Beckett, Ionesco, Adamov. We lend this theater its due respect, of course, but our theater constitutes a total break with theirs.

I believe (and I speak for us all) that we are not attempting to annihilate the word, but to enrich the theater with something it was in danger of losing, that is, movement and imagery. That should make it obvious that we are not out to crush the theater. My theater is very modest; I do not mean to place myself on a level with my colleagues, but I do believe that, thanks to our work and that of the groups I mentioned earlier, we are at the moment witnessing a rebirth of the theater.

You are playing the Devil's Advocate, and you don't want to see what it's all about. One shouldn't spit into a mirror. I am the mirror and witness of society. In some productions of the play I would ask the actors to exhibit a certain degree of violence toward the audience. I don't know if you felt this. It was necessary because I wanted the audience to be party to the condition of a Spanish political prisoner. You say that the play is disgusting, horrible. Well, I wanted it to be exactly that—every bit as atrocious as reality is. Only a few weeks ago, in Barcelona, some young boys—one a Spaniard, the other a Czech—were executed by the same method described in my play, the garrote. The torture of the garrote is very slow and excruciatingly painful. Death can be agonizing. And these are the horrifying facts in this case: one of the boys was a basketball player, robust and with a powerful neck, and according to the Madrid correspondent of *L'Express*, it took him twenty-five minutes to die. We cannot hide our heads in the sand; we must look reality in the face, as witnesses to it. That may shock you. I would like it to shock you more deeply yet, to the point of getting you to cry out against this horror and keep it from happening again.

No, I think that most of the critics who wrote about *And They Put Handcuffs on the Flowers* understood that it is a play filled with tenderness. I was constantly saying to the actors performing it in New York (I express myself badly in English): "Big emotion!" That was the main thing, to display much emotion, to be very nostalgic, very sentimental. But even if you were left shocked and shattered, I know people just like you, who are shocked and shattered but nevertheless spend their summers in Madrid peacefully under the protection of the fascist police. While you and I are talking, there are people who have spent over twenty years in a



I gather you believe in a kind of theater that conditions the audience as the mass media do, a theater with a subversive thrust necessary in a so-called liberal bourgeois democracy. Since you are no longer in Spain, how do you define your role in a French society that is apparently becoming more and more Spanish in its methods?

Although you claim that there are differences among the United States, France, and Spain, the country in which your works are published—France—is, after all, a bourgeois country. Can one deny that France, like the United States, bears a part of the responsibility for what goes on in Spain, in the sense that if a certain kind of society did not exist in France, neither would Spain have the kind of society that has grown there since the Civil War?

Do you write your plays in Spanish or French?

How has the handling of a language that is not your own affected your work?

Then that gives you an advantage?

On this subject, what do you think of Genet, since he

Madrid prison cell. That, to me, is much more shocking. I believe that a totalitarian regime, like the Franco regime in Spain, the Nazi regime, or the Pinochet regime in Chile, prostitutes the theater. In comparison with the novel, which is a voyage and follows an itinerary, the theater is always a moral lesson. When the playwright sits down to write, he knows what he is going to say and to show, whether his name is Beckett, Brecht or Arrabal. That is why the theater has always been persecuted. That is why I, who am not a political person, and my theater, have lost all right to exist in Spain. Those who write theater in Spain do not have their work forbidden because, simply stated, their plays are novels. Fascist governments everywhere capitalize on the theater's nature as spectacle and prostitute it by converting it into dramatic ceremonies designed to traumatize the people. In Chile, for example, the poet Jara was condemned to death by a court of justice, but before his execution, his hands were cut off and he was forced to sing. We cannot leave the theater exclusively in the hands of our enemies; we, too, must take advantage of it. What proves the usefulness of the play you mention is that, everywhere and every time it was produced, the Spanish authorities exerted all possible pressure to have it prohibited. Even in a country as liberal as Sweden, Spanish fascists, including a bishop, formed an association to prevent its showing. It is a play that disturbs, and not for the reasons that it disturbs you.

The difference between countries like France and Spain is like the difference between night and day. Of course France has its share of trends that are alarming, but nothing comparable to what goes on in Spain. Keep in mind that a few days ago a group of people accused of having assembled in a church in order to talk were sentenced to twenty years in prison. [The case of Marcelino Camacho.] In spite of everything, in France we can express ourselves. We have our difficulties, but, nonetheless, my books are published, my plays are produced, my films are shown.

France, within its limited means, does what it can for the cause of Spanish democracy. But what can I say? Would you have me not publish my works in France? I suffer because I am not published in Spain. I feel that a tree has a right to its own soil and a writer to his own words and language. Obviously, it is a source of great sadness to me not to be able to express myself in Spanish. I am not a voluntary exile; exile was imposed upon me. I didn't choose not to publish in Spain; my plays were rejected. My plays are published and my films shown everywhere in the world except in Spain. I'm not responsible for that. In a way, censorship is the only distinction that a poet can accept from the Franco regime.

Forgive me for saying so, but that is the classic question put by fascists who then end up by reproaching me for not writing in Spanish. If I do not publish in Spanish, it is because the Franco censorship prevents me from doing so. I write in Spanish, and with my wife I translate my work into French.

Some critics who have studied my theater, my novels, and my poems mention my style. I think that an important aspect of my style is the fact that I speak French badly, and in so doing I enrich the language. But I am not unique in this. The contemporary French theater (the most important in the world) is made up in large part of foreigners: Beckett, Ionesco, Adamov. Even the latest theater is created by foreigners. Topor is Polish; without exception, all the important stage managers in France at the moment are foreigners: Victor García, Lavelli, Savary . . . and I think it is a good thing.

Yes, of course, since it is so difficult for us, who are foreigners and half-breeds, to master a foreign language. We enjoy the battle, and in the end, it serves our purpose.

is a half-breed, morally speaking, but a native Frenchman? Do you like the language and general style of his theater?

Yes, but there are works like The Balcony that seem to stake out somewhat the same territory as yours.

The fact that you live in Paris is an act of faith, since Paris or France must be the most appropriate channel for disseminating shock and violence as means of communication. Now, doesn't that amount to doing the same thing as someone who wants to give an example by using the garrote? Do you believe that there are other systems of communication aside from violence, at least after that one has been exhausted?

*René Girard, in his book *La Violence et le sacré*, speaks of the sacrificial ceremony as a means utilized by society to destroy the violence in its midst, and he writes that the act of choosing a victim resembles violence but is not actual violence. Thus, when you mentioned the ceremony that the Spanish police performed in destroying an individual, it seemed to me that what the police did was to recreate this violence. However, in your theater, since this violence is unreal, in the sense that one is playing at violence, the reaction provoked is not exactly non-violent.*

But you have said that your theater is a reaction against the brutality of events in Spain.

Does your theater reach the audience for which you create it?

Unfortunately, it is a very long time since Genet has written anything.

I believe Genet is one of the geniuses of the French theater, a great poet. When he was asked: "Aren't you a little sad not to have known your father or mother?" he answered: "How lucky I am! I always imagined that my father was Hercules and my mother a crocodile." I do think he was lucky in that way. If you analyze Genet's theater, whether *The Maids* or *The Balcony*, you discover a pure theater of words. Today's stage managers have embellished it. I recommend to you the issue of *The Drama Review* [June 1973] in which there are photographs of the production of *The Balcony* presented in Rio de Janeiro. It was fantastic! Genet went to Rio and saw the production but found it dreadful because he could not find His Majesty the Word anywhere. All he found was His Majesty the Body. But, nevertheless, he was a precursor without knowing it. The case of Artaud is different. Artaud was a precursor in every way. As I read Artaud I was frightened because I had the sensation that he had foreseen everything that I was to say. He had mentioned the Panic theater, even used the very word. Why, he had spoken about *The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria!* In Paris, I had the audience sit in swivel chairs; he had spoken of that and of everything else that we had done. One day, at Breton's surrealist café, I told Breton about my feelings, and Breton, who despised Artaud, said to me: "Oh, Artaud always got excited about nothing." A strange thing to say, since Breton was at that moment the spokesman for the intelligentsia of the world. He didn't appreciate Artaud's artistic merits.

I have forty plays and there are all sorts of voices in them. It would seem that nothing but violence is seen in them (our Devil's Advocate said so). My theater, my films, my novels are works of tenderness. I am always surprised to see a shocked and irritated audience. My theater overflows with love. Turning to Paris, our having gathered in Paris was accidental. In Spain there lived a wonderful woman called Theresa of Avila. She was persecuted by the Inquisition, as you know. When she was eight years old, she took her brother by the hand and left home. When her father, who had set out to look for them, finally found them, he asked her: "What are you up to?" She answered: "I'm leaving Spain." And her father insisted: "But why?" "To conquer Glory," she replied. I think that all of us—Goya, Picasso, Miró, Juan Gris (I do not want to equate myself with them)—all of us have left Spain to try to attain glory (I'm not using the word in a frivolous sense), to find love, the love that was denied us in Spain. When I was in Spain, I had tuberculosis. I could not breathe, I was suffocating. Immediately upon my arrival in France, I had an operation and was cured. I smoke, I am healthy . . . because I can breathe.

I think that you have read my plays differently from me. In my plays, no one pretends anything. My theater is direct: what is said is said. As to the question of violence, we have arrived at a society in which there is almost no domestic violence, no violence of daily habit. There are sudden explosions, like Vietnam and Chile, because there is no violence in private, conjugal relationships. It is a pity that relationships between couples are not more intense, as they were, for example, in Spain, where a husband would beat his wife because she had looked out of the window during his absence. The couples were always united by very powerful bonds, and next day the husband would go back to his work, while the wife, in the patio, would tell us everything that had happened because she was proud of it. That's a thing of the past.

Brutality in the intimacy of love relationships does not distress me at all. On the contrary, I approve of it heartily. What disturbs me is institutionalized brutality. After the reign of the Catholic Kings, Spain submitted to the Inquisition and to intolerance: that disturbs me.

Unfortunately, we are shut out from society. We work with all our might, but that does not prevent you, who are among the elite of society, and all the other madmen like you, who rule the world and don't give a penny for the arts, from

thumbing your noses at us. The only thing left for us is to pour out our feelings with as much sincerity as we can muster. When I was in prison, Beckett wrote to the Spanish judge to say that Arrabal should be freed, and he used a sentence applicable to writers in general, not only to me in particular: "The writer should not be kept in prison because we must not add to his suffering." I think Beckett is right. The writer is a man who suffers; he reveals his pain in his art; and unfortunately the world around us, the body powerful, doesn't give a royal damn. The Spanish Civil War was won by the great forces of wealth, the Church and the military. But another social class won something too, in spite of its great suffering—the working class. In the short run the worker lost, but then the State tried to win him over. The real losing class was the *petite bourgeoisie*. The Spanish *petite bourgeoisie* joined forces with liberty and fought for it. But once they had lost the war, there was nothing for them, nothing to lose, nothing to gain. Which is why for us, who belong to this *petite bourgeoisie*, the only refuge is a kind of ceremony, something wordless that can be expressed only through humor or exile.

You pretend to insult us by saying that we are representatives of the bourgeoisie . . .

Your mention of ceremony brings to mind the type of theater called "ceremonial." How did the theater develop in this direction? What theater existed in the Spain of the nineteen-fifties? How did you begin to write?

Can one say that your theater, rather than a challenge to modern society, is an effort to carry the dramatic art back to its roots and convert it into a primitive rite?

What relationship do you see between pantomime and drama? Can you explain your idea of an abstract mechanical theater that you raised in connection with Orchestration théâtrale?

Could you specify what you mean by "Panic theater" and in what way it differs from that of Michel de Ghelderode, for example?

One critic has said that your contribution to the the-

*Just a moment; in what way is it insulting to state the truth? Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, Picasso, Buñuel, Godard, Beckett, Einstein, Ionesco, all were born into the *petite bourgeoisie* and not into the aristocracy or the working class. There is nothing insulting about belonging to a particular segment of society. Many Frenchmen try to deny that they are *petits bourgeois*. What is wrong with being *petits bourgeois*, bourgeois or aristocrats?*

*It so happens that I was the first to speak of ceremony. Why? It is not a question of esthetic options but of a deliberate choice. What is a ceremony? It is a spiritual vehicle through which a group may communicate with someone whose language is unknown. For example, a group of Protestants meet in a church or temple, and in order to communicate with God, they create a ceremony. Or another example: we, my social class, the *petite bourgeoisie*, were shattered by the Civil War. I am in Spain, trying to speak to my neighbor, whose language is incomprehensible to me, and for that reason I create this ceremony. That is why from its very origins my theater has encompassed ceremony as well as blasphemy and eroticism. Their meaning in this context is diametrically opposed to their usual connotations. Today, when a writer creates an erotic or pornographic work, he may do it for a variety of reasons. In my case, I hoped to liberate my body and soul, to purge myself, to free my spirit, to break the chains of fascism and Catholicism. When Breton published the only play ever to appear in the surrealist review, *La Brèche*, it was one of mine [*La Communion solennelle*, No. 4 (1963), 55-59], although he felt that "theater is an obscenity that leads to crime." In point of fact, I believe that Breton did not find this vileness in my work and was impelled to commit a surrealist crime: publish a play by Arrabal, simply because my text was a poetic expression.*

I would prefer it to be a ceremony in favor of liberty and tolerance.

*I am not interested in pantomime. *Orchestration* reflects a period (1960) of abstract pictorial fanaticism.*

*Panic theater and Ghelderode, my God! Alexandre Jodorowsky, Topor, and I formed part of the surrealist movement, and one fine day we were shocked to discover that the surrealist group was dictatorial and dogmatic. We were troubled by this dogmatism, and that is why we created the Panic theater in 1963. Shortly thereafter it was completely forgotten, but now it is gathering momentum: it is in paperback, there are quite a few people who proclaim themselves its partisans, and in the 1973 exhibition at the *Grand Palais*, the painters of the Panic movement were out in front. But it is a child that has grown up too fast, and as such we reject it.*

ater is that of having initiated a comic style. Is that true? If so, what kind of humor do you see in your work?

I have a question that may be simplistic, but . . .

. . . I wonder what is your concept of a realistic theater?

Since you mentioned other Spaniards who have left Spain, how would you place yourself in relation to Luis Buñuel?

What do you think of Buñuel's films?

Why have you written a book about chess?

Insofar as all your earlier work derives its strength from its position vis-à-vis a certain social reality, it seems to me that this obsession with chess represents an abandonment of that direction.

I am thinking of another one of your old colleagues, Topor, who also formed part of the Panic theater in 1963 and who produced a deplorable film called *La Planète magique*.

Without Topor, there would have been no film. I agree that his drawings are sensational. Nevertheless, the film is fanciful and has absolutely nothing to do with any sort of social reality . . .

You did so for a long time.

Geneviève Lemeau wrote that in 1959. But although I received the Black Humor prize, I do not believe that humor is a principal element in my theater.

There are no simple questions, only simplistic answers.

There is a writer who is supposedly realistic: Bertolt Brecht. In 1955, in Madrid, I heard about a play by Brecht. So I hitchhiked to Paris to see it. I didn't know Brecht at all, and I saw a marvelous play, *Mother Courage*, at the *Théâtre des Nations*, presented by the Berlin Ensemble. The production was in German. It was magnificent; I do not know a word of German. Brecht's wife played fabulously. There were sublime moments, prodigious images. Unfortunately, some of Brecht's books fell into my hands after that, and I was astounded to see that Brecht the extraordinary stage director was superior to Brecht the writer. For me there is greater truth in Beckett's world than in Brecht's. Brecht is a writer of fantasy, Beckett of reality.

Spaniards of my generation did not know Buñuel at all for one simple reason: he was not allowed in Spain until six or seven years ago. Before that, he was not even mentioned in anthologies of the film published in Spain. Yet, many people think that Arrabal imitates Buñuel. My film *Viva la muerte* was shown at the Cannes Film Festival, and Buñuel went to see it. The journalists surrounded him afterwards and asked his opinion. He liked it very much. One of them said regrettably: "You cannot say anything about Arrabal's film because he copies you." "Yes," said Buñuel, "our worlds touch, though without converging by any means. But don't forget that he's a Spaniard, and so am I, thank God."

They are works of genius.

I find chess very interesting because the game has a great deal in common with the theater. Spassky said: "Chess is like life," and Bobby Fischer answered: "No, chess *is* life." In the game of chess one is always tempted to give explanations a posteriori. Consult any chess manual, and you will read what sounds like a treatise on the classical drama, with talk of three acts representing the opening, the middle, and the end. For me a game of chess is an act in which chance plays a large part and which is like a battle, a boxing match. One cannot have a single, fixed plan, even though in theory this is essential. It can't be so because everything depends on what the opponent does. The opponent can play extremely well or extremely badly, and with each move one must create a plan that counteracts the preceding one—just as in life, as in the theater.

Not at all! I am the opposite of what you take me for; I consider myself an esthete of the minority, unfortunately for me.

It is not deplorable and it is not called *magique* but *La Planète sauvage*. He did not make the film, only the drawings. They are fabulous, ingenious. He is a latter-day Goya. The director, and not he, is responsible for the film.

We are too shocked by social reality to have the idiotic nerve to speak of it directly. Topor lived in Poland, he suffered to the very marrow because of his Jewish parents, he suffered terribly. We too, in Spain, have suffered. But we dare not to do what the majority does and parade that suffering openly.

Not at all. I very rarely wrote anything of a social nature.

You mean to say that *Viva la muerte* is the synthesis of a private experience, of personal suffering?

You speak a great deal about confusion. How can you be a lover of chess and at the same time a preacher of confusion?

Then we might say that you are guided by an esthetic of confusion. Yet in almost all your works, especially in one like *The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria*, we can see a perfect structure. Doesn't this play represent a negation of confusion, and isn't the very act of writing a triumph over confusion?

Do you see your theater as based on a social conscience, or does it have a poetic foundation? I ask you this because you often speak as a theoretician of the theater.

One thing troubles me. You say that you have never written anything of a social nature and that it is purely by accident that you are prohibited in Spain. I wonder to what extent you believe your work to have a subversive content?

What exactly is the difference between a propaganda play and those that you write?

You say you are a witness to your era. That means that you place yourself into an historical perspective and that you

Yes. *Viva la muerte* has as its sole aim the portrayal of a child who witnesses the arrival of fascism and crime. It is very simple. Take a book that describes a situation in general terms, let's say the Spanish Civil War. You can't really form an impression of it, but if you talk to me about it, you can, because I can tell you about the food, about what one saw every day, and in that way you can understand what happened. Our mission is to be witnesses to our time and to shock the bourgeois, without meaning to, something which is frowned upon nowadays. The artist's mission is to be original, to explore the future, to explore confusion. It is a most exalting human activity.

I am passionate and fanatical about chess and about mathematics, and this leads me to believe ever increasingly in confusion. I believe that one can construct a dialectic about history out of the past. Once an event has occurred, we can analyze it. But the future acts as a bolt from the blue; we cannot anticipate what will happen tomorrow. I call that confusion. It is better to admit that than to try, as Marxist analysts would, to imagine that everything is ordered, that one can know in advance how life is to unfold. It would be sheer fantasy to discover the laws of confusion and the rules governing Utopia.

No, no. Obviously I can create a perfectly structured theater, but the more perfect the structure, the greater the confusion of what is said.

A poetic foundation. I would prefer to be a poet in the theater.

It is subversive in Spain. It is forbidden because my plays are not pieces of political propaganda. The Franco government readily accepts propaganda, whatever its nature, but I do not write propaganda, and that is why I am feared. In my work there is something that escapes the authorities, something dangerous. They cannot tolerate my activities. Were I to proclaim myself Communist or Socialist or Democrat, they would know exactly the limits to which I would go.

In propaganda, spontaneity is crushed by the need to say something. No theater of propaganda has ever been successful propaganda. I experimented with the theater of propaganda only once. In Paris, at the *Théâtre National Populaire* (a very large hall with four thousand seats), we created a play together with the actors. I told them: "I am not a political person," and they answered me: "You are a poet, you create images; we will tell you things, and you will elaborate on them." The actors would give me a situation; they would tell me, for example: talk about aggression in Chile, and this and that. At night it was up to me to write and to try to put all that into so-called poetic images. It was a great deal of work for me; never have I labored so much over a play. Nobody agreed about anything; I constantly had to rewrite and refashion. There were countless versions. At last, when the play was to the taste of the actors (mostly Trotskyites), when it was revolutionary enough to convince everyone, it was put on in the largest theater in Paris, very lavishly, because the French government is rather masochistic. It never provides support for a play by Beckett, Arrabal, or Ionesco. No, it opens its purse only for a political piece against itself. We had a great deal of money and everything going for us, but it was a catastrophe. It was a propaganda piece, and no one believed in it. The images were drowned out by the plan as a whole. There were some good things, especially a bullfight, but the play fell flat because it was propaganda. I was no longer a witness; I was fulfilling an obligation.

The demands I make are perfectly innocent: freedom, tolerance, etc. But it would be too pretentious to imagine that my theater could bring about all that. When World War II exploded in Paris, very few people resisted the Nazis. Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir do not join the Resistance; they put on plays in

must have a vision of the future. Do you see how the theater could influence the future? When you give your testimony, is it for the moment at hand, is it to present a new concept of the world, or for some other purpose?

In all fairness, there is no proof to the story that García Lorca was a homosexual.

Do you foresee any new dramatic forms? Is there hope for a new kind of theater?

Normally a playwright expects applause from his audience. Do you?

[Translated by Eva Kronik]

1943-44. German officers are seen in the theaters. At the same time, there is a man, Samuel Beckett, who, the moment the war breaks out, forms part of a resistance network and fights. That, I think, is admirable. When times are difficult, it is Beckett—by no means a political individual—who fights with the Resistance, while Sartre presents plays for the Nazis to see. The situation in Spain is similar. Who is killed at the outset of the Civil War? The only Spanish poet who was not political: García Lorca. It is fantastic. You know the explanations given by Franco's "justice" for his death—that he was not executed for political reasons, but because he was a homosexual. A charming explanation! If to kill a man for political reasons is a serious matter what can we say about shooting him because he is a homosexual! In any case, a professor in England [Ian Gibson] has written a fascinating book called *La represión nacionalista de Granada en 1936 y la muerte de Federico García Lorca* [Paris: Rueda Ibérica, 1971]. In investigating his death, he found that García Lorca was executed immediately after the war began. Innocent as a child, he was placed against a wall and shot. He was not killed at once, and believing he had been spared, he cried out "I am saved, I am not dead, I am saved!" Then the leader of the firing squad said "He's a fag. We ought to finish him off in his rear because he's a fag." And that is exactly what they did. The English professor claims to have found the man who fired that fatal shot. Once again, the most innocent of all is the one to have suffered. Freedom without political commitment is what fascism really cannot bear. That is why my work is completely forbidden.

All the worse, then, to give homosexuality as an excuse. It is no crime to be a homosexual.

Robert Wilson, for one, has written a number of plays that impose something new. The first is *Christopher Columbus*, the best known is called *Deafman Glance*, and he is now writing *The Life and Times of Joseph Stalin*. If you are interested in Wilson, the journal which I direct has devoted a 300-page issue to him. He is exploring a terrain very close to my heart, that of imaginative, oneiric drama. In Shiraz, Iran, on a mountainside where twenty Jewish mystics had been slaughtered, he presented a mystical spectacle with three hundred actors that went on twenty-four hours a day for eight whole days. Very often I was the only spectator. Sometimes I would leave, and then the play would go on for nothing and no one. For some mysterious reason, the Iranian bourgeoisie and the journalists from Paris and New York would come at midnight, stay for a while, and then leave. Wilson gave a press conference with some Moslem children by his side. The children all wore black bands over their eyes. It was very moving. A few months earlier in New York, in the Italian section on Spring Street, Wilson put on a play in a house that he had transformed into an extraordinary pagoda. I was living in the Chelsea Hotel, and I took a taxi because the play was to start at six o'clock in the morning. The driver was Puerto Rican and we talked. When he asked me where I was going, I told him: "To the theater." "But that is impossible at this hour," he answered. "Oh, yes," I said, and since he was dying of curiosity, I added: "You can come along." Let me describe the piece for you. A narrow room with cushions along the walls had about thirty spectators seated on the floor. There was a loggia above and a sort of pyramid on what might have been the stage. We waited, and after half an hour we could hear some voices humming what could have been poems or prayers. This lasted a half-hour and then there was nothing else. That was it. There was nothing visual about the spectacle, and after about three hours of it, Wilson's thirty actors danced around us. I said to Wilson: "Listen, there was no play here," and he answered: "No, I didn't want to put on a play, I wanted people to meditate." Indeed, the Puerto Rican taxi driver did meditate; he was enraptured. That evening Wilson put on a play in which New York was set on fire while a child was playing the violin; and there were elements of even greater import. Bertolt Brecht's son, Stefan Brecht, is a great follower of the avant-garde theater and detests his father's political drama. He took part in the Living Theater, the Open Theater, the Ridiculous Theater—that is, he helped financially and participated as an actor. Now he is active in Bob Wilson's experiments. It is incredible to see this man, filled with hatred for his father's world and plunged into a world so different from it.

These days everybody applauds and spoils the occasion. What was done in Spain in my youth was better: some people would applaud and some would hiss and boo. That's not done anymore. In New York a play is put on. It is badly received by the critics and the audience; but nevertheless, on the day of the dress rehearsal and at the opening performance, the public applauds. There are plays in which I did everything possible to have the spectators in passionate opposition and disinclined to applaud, for example in *And They Put Handcuffs on the Flowers*. But convention rules the theater, and the audience always applauds at the end.